

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A suture passer shuttle comprising:

a suture passing instrument having a cannulated shaft terminating in sharp tip for piercing tissue; and

a strand of flexible metallic material ~~having two ends and~~ formed into an elongated loop having a crimped end with an acute bend, said strand being received within the cannulated shaft of the suture passing instrument such that said crimped end extends out of said sharp tip as said strand is advanced through the cannulated shaft of said suture passing instrument; and

~~a closure for holding the two ends of the strand together.~~
2. (Currently amended) The suture passer shuttle of claim 1, wherein said flexible metallic material comprises nitinol.
3. (Currently amended) The suture passer shuttle of claim 1, wherein said strand of flexible material comprises an open loop with two free ends held together with a closure comprising ~~comprises~~ a shrink sleeve.
4. (Canceled)
5. (Currently amended) The suture passer shuttle of claim 4, wherein said crimped end ~~radius~~ is formed ~~by crimping said flexible material at an said one of said ends~~ opposite side of the loop from said closure.

6. (Currently amended) The suture ~~passer~~ shuttle of claim 1, wherein
said elongated loop has a ~~having~~ sufficient length to extend into a portal and out an
accessory portal through a joint undergoing arthroscopic surgery.

7. (Currently amended) The suture ~~passer~~ shuttle of claim 6, wherein
said ~~having a~~ length comprises ~~of~~ about 22 inches.

8. (Canceled).

9. (Currently amended) A method of securing tissue to bone, ~~using a~~
~~length of suture, the method~~ comprising the steps of:

installing a suture anchor with an attached suture strand in a portion of bone
adjacent a section of tissue to be secured;

piercing said tissue with a sharp distal end of a cannulated suture passing
instrument ~~passer~~;

deploying a loop formed of flexible metal wire from the sharp distal end of
said cannulated suture passing instrument ~~passer~~;

capturing said suture strand with said loop; and

passing said captured suture strand through said tissue by retracting the
loop through the tissue.

10. (Currently amended) The method of claim 9, further comprising the
steps of:

retrieving and passing said suture strand through an accessory portal;

retrieving and passing said loop through the accessory portal[[],]; and
capturing said suture strand with said loop outside of the accessory portal.

11. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein said suture stand is
captured in said loop by threading said suture strand through a radius of said loop.

12. (Currently amended) The method of claim 10, further comprising the
step of retracting said suture passing instrument ~~passer~~ through said portal, leaving
said flexible loop passing through said tissue.

13. (Original) The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of
forming a knot between said suture strand and a second suture stand also attached
to said suture anchor.

14. (New) The suture passer of claim 1, wherein said cannulated shaft of
said suture passing instrument has a helically shaped end portion leading to said
sharp tip.